3-2017

Forage News [2017-03]

Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, University of Kentucky

Forage News

Keeping Forage-Livestock producers in Kentucky informed
Dr. S. Ray Smith and Krista Lea, MS.~ Editors
March 2017

36th Alfalfa and Stored Forage Award Winners

The Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council honors outstanding accomplishments in alfalfa science and production to individuals in the public, industry and producer sectors. Recipients honored at the 36th Kentucky Alfalfa and Stored forages Conference included:

Joey Brashear: Warren Thompson Industry Award

Mike and Jim Green: Charles Schnitzler Alfalfa Producer Award

Brandon Bell: Garry Lacefield Public Service Award

The Kentucky Dept. of Agriculture Forage Testing Program also honored individuals that produced high quality alfalfa and alfalfa/grass hay. Winners included John McCoy (Warren), Geralds Farm (Hart), Roy Reichenbach (Lincoln) Creekview Farm (Washington), Jim Green (Franklin), Woodland Place (Christian), Mark Thomas (Fleming), Simon Yoder (Todd), Michael Bale (Hart) and John Nowak (Christian). Forage Testing Program information can be found at www.kyarg.com. The conference, held in Cave City on Feb. 21st was well attended by producers, agents and industry representatives. Full proceedings of the Conference are available online at www.uky.edu/ag/forage.

Farmer Success with Novel Endophyte Fescue

When Anderson County livestock producer Mike Wilson bought a 60-acre hayfield in Franklin County, he knew he had a lot of work in front of him. The previous owners had let people cut hay for nearly 30 years without putting any nutrients back in the ground, which meant the existing grass stand was a mixture of Kentucky 31 tall fescue and weeds. Mike was interested in how to bring the stand back into full production with a high quality forage. After attending the KY Grazing School he decided to plant a novel endophyte tall fescue variety that shows good stand life without the toxins in KY-31. Mike applied for and was accepted to receive USDA-NRCS cost share to complete the project.

The field was planted to two varieties of novel endophyte fescue 4 1/2 years ago and Mike has been pleased with the improved hay production and animal performance. In a recent interview with UK 's Jeff Franklin and Katie Pratt, Mike related the following: "I think my cows are doing better on it. It seems like they maintain their weight better. They just hold their body condition better through the winter on novel endophyte fescue hay."

To help more farmers learn how to renovate their pastures and hayfields with a novel endophyte variety, UK has partnered with the Alliance for Grassland Renewal to host a Tall Fescue Renovation Workshop March 9 at UK's Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and Spindletop Research Farm.

More information about the Tall Fescue Renovation Workshop is available on the UK forage extension website http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/. The video interview with Mike and county agent Tommy Yankey is at http://news.ca.uky.edu/article/uk-helps-producer-renovate-hayfield. Discounted registration ends March 6, register online at https://kyfescue.eventbrite.com. ~ Katie Pratt

Featured Publication: Establishing Alfalfa for Forage (Univ. of Arkansas FSA15)

Alfalfa is one of the highest quality and highest yielding forages. Alfalfa is used for hay, silage or grazing for many types of livestock and grows under a wide range of environmental conditions. A properly established and managed stand of alfalfa can remain productive for 5 to 10 years.

Keys to successful alfalfa establishment include proper soil fertility, variety selection, seedbed preparation and seeder calibration, pest control and stage of maturity at harvest.

The full publication can be found at http://www.uaex.edu/farm-ranch/animals-forages/pastures/forage-management-guides.aspx ~ Dr. John Jennings

Making High Quality Baleage

At the 36th Alfalfa and Stored Forage Conference held recently in Cave City, Dennis Hancock gave an excellent presentation on making high quality baleage. The following Key Steps were taken from Dennis's proceedings article.

- Ensure that adequate moisture (45-60% moisture; 40-65% dry matter) is present to support the beneficial bacteria that cause fermentation.
- Do not bale at high moisture (> 65% moisture) to avoid excessive alcohol production. High moisture can cause secondary fermentation, reduced intake, and even animal poisoning (e.g., botulism, listeriosis).
- Make dense bales and wrap them as soon as possible after baling to exclude oxygen quickly. This minimizes heat damage and excessive DM loss.
- Apply 6 or more layers of plastic on individually-

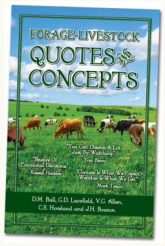
wrapped bales and 8 or more layers on inline-wrapped baleage bales. If possible, double the plastic layers between bales when using an inline wrapper.

- Ensure that the plastic is being pre-stretched 50-70% before it's wrapped around the bales (refer to specifications in the owner's manual).
- Add homofermentative and/or heterofermentative bacterial inoculants to promote more rapid pH drop and/or more stable silage, respectively. Use the inoculant for the forage crop to be ensiled.
- Avoid mixing the inoculant in chlorinated water and use inoculant rates of at least 100,000 colony forming units/g. Keep inoculant temperature below 100 °F.

~ Dennis Hancock, 36th Annual KY Alfalfa and Stored Forages Conference. Full proceedings at UK Forage Extension website, www.uky.edu/ag/forage.

Quote of the Month:
"*Good Variety Decisions Don't Guarantee Success, But Bad ones Can Guarantee Failure*"

Plant breeding is a relatively young science, but it has resulted in amazing increases in productivity. In the case of forage crops, many traits have been improved including forage yield, forage quality, disease resistance, insect resistance, timing of forage growth and tolerance to adverse weather conditions. Universities, commercial companies and other organizations and individuals conduct variety trials that provide producers with valuable information that can help them make good variety purchasing decisions.



Obtaining and using such information can greatly increase the likelihood of success in both establishment and production. Purchase Forage-Livestock Quotes and Concepts books for $5 each by contacting ukforageextension@uky.edu. Go to the UK Forage Website for reports on the forage varieties that perform the best in KY (www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage).

Don't Leave the Leaves

The primary goal of any alfalfa grower should be to harvest as many leaves as possible. The ones left on the ground after the baler or chopper exits the field become fertilizer, but they won't translate into much milk or meat.

The following are simple steps to maintain leaves.

1. In the humid environment of the eastern U.S. leaves can be lost to fungal diseases. Choose good varieties. Also, fungicides have been shown to help maintain leaves, but the response has been variable.

2. Mow into wide swaths to ensure faster and more uniform drying.

3. Check the ground under the swaths or windrows following mowing and conditioning. There should be minimal leaf loss at this stage, though flail-type conditioners are prone to more leaf loss than roller types.

4. Every time forage is moved between cutting and baling more leaf loss occurs; the wetter the forage, the less the leaf loss. Minimize the amount hay is moved in the field (rake to center rather than one side). Mergers result in less leaf loss.

5. During harvest, maximize windrow size to the capacity of the baler or chopper. Larger windrows result in less leaf loss at the pickup.

6. Bale at the proper moisture. Forage that is too dry will result in excessive leaf loss and poorer forage quality.

In summary, be sensitive to the concept of "harvesting leaves" rather than "harvesting hay." In most cases, timing, swath manipulation, and machinery adjustments can go a long way in taking more leaves off the field. ~ Mike Rankin, Hay and Forage Grower" Feb. 2017

Fertilizing Cool Season Pastures

Good pasture management begins with maintaining good soil fertility to promote the growth of desirable grasses and legumes such as orchardgrass, perennial ryegrass, novel tall fescue, KY bluegrass, ladino clover and red clover. Follow these simple guidelines to improve soil fertility and maximize forage growth.

Soil sampling:

- Can be done most of the year, but early spring and fall are most common
- Sample four inches deep
- Divide large pastures for sampling purposes

Phosphate, Potash and Lime

- P and K promote forage growth and longevity, in grass pastures. Lime adjusts the pH of the soil, making other nutrients more available to the plants.
- Applications of P, K and lime (and other nutrients) are determined by a soil test and are usually not be needed every year for pastures.
- P,K and Lime can be applied at any time of the year that weather is cooperative

Nitrogen Applications

- Spring nitrogen is generally not needed for cool season pastures because grass growth is rapid in the spring and more mowing will be required. However, farms that have high stocking rates and intensive grazing can benefit from light nitrogen applications in early spring.
- Apply nitrogen in mid-August on pastures being stockpiled (40-80lbs/acre). Light fall N applications to other pastures helps to prolong fall growth, increase tillering, and prepare plants for overwintering (October 30-60 lbs/acre).
- Only apply N in the summer to warm season annual or perennial forage, such as bermudagrass. Be sure to apply urea during cool days, just before rain or use volatilization inhibitors.

For more information on Liming and Fertilizing forages see AGR-1 at www.uky.edu/ag/forage. ~ Krista Lea

Upcoming Events—more at **www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage**

MAR 9 Tall Fescue Renovation Workshop, Lexington, KY
APR 25-26 KY Grazing School, Princeton, KY
JUNE 8 Equine Farm and Facilities Expo, Lexington, KY
SEPT 27-28 KY Grazing School, Versailles, KY
OCT 17 KY Grazing Conf., Lexington, KY
JAN 14-17, 2018 AFGC Annual Conf. Louisville, KY

Subscribe to Forage News digitally and access full articles on the UK Forage Website.